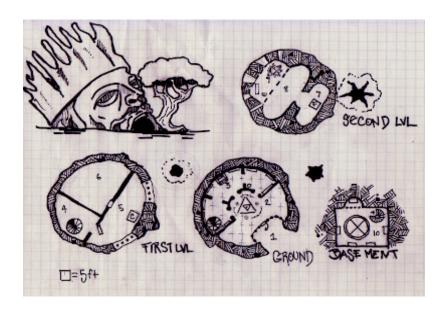
PRISON OF THE HATED PRETENDER

An adventure for a party of adventurers levels 0-1. The Prison contains several traps and monsters that could fairly readily kill a first level character – but the traps are not unobtrusive and the monsters can be fled from easily.



PRISON OF THE HATED PRETENDER

The Prison of the Hated Pretender is a small sculptural tower that was built many years ago (how many no one really knows, but at least four generations) by an army of fanatical soldiers led by an inquisitor in a baby-faced mask and feathered robe. It was built as an eternal prison for an enemy the crusaders dragged with them in a coffin like cage. Perhaps the prisoner was a leader they had deposed, a turncoat or a defeated enemy of their harsh faith, but the army never made that clear. After several months of abusing the locals for a perceived lack of spiritual rigor, the crusaders moved on leaving a strange tower, a tower that is now shunned. The locals have taken to calling the accursed place "The Prison of the Hated Pretender" as the entire squat tower has been carved and sculpted to appear as a bearded, screaming, and crowned head half buried in the dirt.

The tower stands on top of a low knoll with a large solitary tree growing next to it and local gossips claim all or some of the following about it:

What the Scabrous Yokels in that village of broken down huts are saying
There's a golden orb in the tower that grants wishes, the former wise-woman saw it in a dream.
The spirits of the evil crusaders who built the tower are trapped within, but can be sated with gold coins.
Lately bandits have been hiding out in the prison, but they'll get theirs - that place is powerfully accursed.
A ghostly figure is sometimes seen at night atop the tower, glimpsed between the crenelations making the sculpture's crown.
The tree next to the tower looks good for climbing, but it used to be a hanging tree and it'll tangle you in its branches and strangle you for old times sake
A ghoul lived in the tower twenty old years ago, but Black Jenny and her sons killed it and scoured the place clean of nicknacks.

GROUND LEVEL

AREA 1 - GATE

The mouth of the statute leads to a small room, floored with dirt and drifts of dried grasses that has obviously been used as an animal den in the past. A cage of rusted, but still sound, steel bars walls the small room off from the rest of the tower. The cage is pierced by a metal bar door held open by a large rock. The door's lock has been smashed.

Outside the gate stands a large gnarled tree, it's branches capable of supporting the weight of a climbing human up to the barred "eyes" in **Area 5**. A moderately skilled climber could climb the tree, transfer to the sculpted face of the prison and climb over the roof to area 9 without much trouble (A simple Dex Roll). The tree is harmless, though close examination will reveal a bit of rope tied around one of its branches.

AREA 2 - ENTRY CHAMBER

A crude stone chamber that has seen much weathering, and is obviously carved directly from a rock outcropping, rather than built up from stones. The floor is stone sanded smooth, but it is coated in dirt and dried grasses that are scattered the room as if by wind. Several of the piles look intentional, and a search will reveal three sites where fires have been previously built on the stone floor. Two are simply scorch marks, but the most recent, though several months old at least, still has a ring of stones dragged in from outside and contains a pile of ashes. The ceiling is mostly free of cobwebs and approximately 10' from the floor, made with massive aged wooden beams supporting worked stone.

The Ward Circle - The 10' diameter circle at the center of the room is free of dirt and debris and the floor has been inlaid with a complicated set of magical sigils. The inlays appear to be carefully set plates of jade and can't be pried up but may be shattered with a pick or blunt weapon and the hundreds of shards picked loose (shards will be valued at 200 GP). Shattering the ward is a bad idea, as it will allow both the Phantoms of Vengeance and the Hated Pretender to escape into the wider world. The Phantasms will turn the land within 5

miles of the tower into a lifeless waste, as they will be forced to return to **Area 10** at night, but the Hated Pretender will attempt to travel to his homeland and will undoubtedly become a nuisance when his insanity lessens and he realizes that the PC's alone may know his origin.

Luckily the Ward provides warning that it is a powerful magical protection. Any person standing inside the circle will hear a high pitched keening and all objects left within the ward are slowly (1' per turn) pushed to its outer edges.

The purpose of the ward is to trap both the entities within the tower and as a warning that outsiders should steer clear of the prison. Neither the Phantasms or the Hated Pretender can cross the ward or the outer edges of the prison, because of the power it contains.

AREA 3 - MUSEUM OF HORRORS

Beyond triple archways surrounding the ward in **Area 2** is a small series of gallery like rooms with large relief carvings jutting several inches from the plastered stone walls. Both the carvings and plaster are in poor repair having been smashed, chiseled and scratched at over the years by the Hated Pretender and more mundane vandals.

The reliefs can still be made out despite the damage, and those in the first room (on the right) seem to tell a story of a cruel overlord using a large magical device to defeat and capture his enemies. The reliefs in the middle room show the overlord's apparent delight in the torment and torture of his captives during a bloody oppressive rule. The final room, where the damage is most evident, contains carvings that depict the overlord's defeat by divine intercession and what appears to be his slow execution.

In the Third chamber there is an unremarkable spiral stone stairway leading both down to **Area 10** and up to **Area 4**. All three rooms contain the skeletons of several small animals (killed by the bored and rage filled Phantasms).

These rooms are filled with bright sunlight streaming in from **Area 1** during the morning hours and at this time will be filled with numerous (1D4 + the number of party members) Phantasms who cavort in the archways where the sun is the brightest. The spirits cannot cross the ward if it is active, but will fixate on any living being in **Area 2**. At other times of day there is a 20% that there will be 1D4 Phantasms floating about these rooms (reroll any time that the party passes through **Area 3**).

At night the Hated Pretender avoids these rooms because the panels telling his story make him feel guilty and remind him of his past.

FIRST LEVEL

AREA 4 - LANDING

A bare and desolate room, with plastered walls that are in much better condition than **Area 3**. Sunlight filters into this room from the counter-weighted wooden door to **Area 5** (which will always swing open unless spiked shut), but it never gets bright enough in this room for the Phantasms to loiter here. There is a 10% every time the room is entered that there will be 1D2 Phantasms moving through this room. The Hated Pretender does not frequent this room often but will sometimes wander in for a change of scenery at night (10% Chance).

AREA 5 - SOLARIUM

The eyes of the prison's sculpted head are in this room, and light pours in through the eyes from about 11 AM until 4PM every day. During this time Phantasms congregate here and dart about in the light shafts. There will be $1D4 + \frac{1}{2}$ number of party members of them 60% of

the time. The Hated Pretender enjoys this room during the evenings and will be first encountered here 20% of the night time.

The room is filled with a scattering of small bones, and a few decorative urns and pots that formerly contained dirt for accent plants, but is otherwise identical to **Area 4**. On close examination an old blood stain can be made out heading towards the stairs in **Area 4** from where the Pretender dragged a corpse to fling it down into **Area 10** several years or months before.

A simple, well used trapdoor in the ceiling is sagging half open, allowing more light into **Area 5**. There is a thick knotted rope of braided hair (human mostly) hanging from a mounting above that allows easy access to the roof.

AREA 6 - PRETENDER'S ABODE

The smell of this chamber will hit the characters the moment they open the door. The windowless room positively reeks of something that should have been dead years before. The room is a jumble of trash and broken furniture, held together badly with fragments of rope and sinew: a dresser, three end tables, a couch and a single chair - all once valuable but now rotted, filth crusted and worthless.

The pretender rests in a nest of rags - the stolen clothes of the tower's victims and a few ancient scrapes of tapestry. In the dresser, or often on the table when the Pretender is in the room, is a small amount of treasure 12 GP, 8 EP, 112 SP, 428 CP and a cracked opal worth 50GP. This is all that remains of the treasures that were locked in the tower with the Pretender after many years of grave robbing and most of it consists of coins scavenged of the Phantasms' victims.

The room is pitch black and the Pretender will be here during the day, crouched in his corner nest, on his one chair gnawing on a bone or playing with his pitiful collection of coins. If the characters shine light at him he will begin screaming and is likely to attack. If they remove any light from the room within 2 rounds of entry he will not attack but still be very agitated and act aggressively, babbling about the glowing ghosts, how he is not "to blame", and suggesting the characters flee.

SECOND LEVEL

AREA 7 - GROTTO

A sunlit grotto during the day, the walls were once painted with fresco showing scowling bearded faces. Someone (The Hated Pretender) has hacked away the eyes and lips of the decorative faces and scrawled the phrase "I NOT KNEEL NOR BOW!" in dark brown letters across the face nearest the trapdoor.

Because of the light during the day there will be 1D4 Phantasms in this room, and they will come to the aid of, or be aided by, the phantasms in Area 8 after one round. At night this room is empty as the Hated Pretender does not like the accusing frescoes, even after his vandalism.

AREA 8 - PUMPKIN PATCH

Half roofed over, and pleasantly filled with sunlight or moonlight, this might even be considered a nice spot if it wasn't atop a cursed tower. Notably there is a pile of smashed wooden furniture in one alcove and a chipped stone tub in the center of the room surrounded

by strange glyphs and containing some kind of plant.

Close examination of the pile of broken furniture will reveal small animal bones and the tarnished gold fittings from a once very nice chair. The fittings and screws can be collected and are worth 200 GP because of their artistic workmanship. The tub is a stone bathtub with large cracks running through it. It has been filled with dirt and is overflowing with a carefully pruned pumpkin vine.

The tub is surrounded by what appear to be magical glyphs written onto the floor with a thick brownish paste (dried blood). The glyphs aren't magical and the pumpkin is perfectly normal, it is also the pet and carefully guarded future delicacy of the Hated Pretender. The Hated Pretender will be in this area most nights (90% of nightime encounter) as he watches his pumpkin and imagines how tasty it will be to his unnaturally famished system when he finally devours it. The Pretender has written the glyphs copying ones from the ward below and using his own vague memory of magic in an effort to protect the pumpkin.

If encountered here the Pretender will almost always immediately attack (2 point penalty to reaction check), assuming the party has come to eat his prize possession. If he destroyed and the pumpkin remains unharmed he will be more charitably inclined towards the party upon their next meeting and automatically parley.

During daylight hours 4+1D4 Phantasms will patrol this area and **Area 9** basking in the sunlight.

BATTLEMENTS - AREA 9

An oval patio area carved out of the same gray, rust flecked stone as the rest of the tower and exposed to the sky. The spines of the tower's sculpted crown form battlements around the back part of the area, powerful wards carved into the rock prevent the escape of wither the Pretender or the Phantasms from this area, though both use this area during the night and day respectively - mostly for moodily staring out at the desolate countryside.

A pair of stone benches sit here, much worm by the elements, but still obviously carved in the likeness of an opulent cushioned chair and a decadent chaise.

Armillary of the Fatidic Stars - Out in the elements on the battlements is the tool that the Hated Pretender used to control his lost empire. A 6' sphere of complicated inter-meshing gears, discs and circles made of bronze, brass and other metals little effected by its years in the rain and mounted on a heavy framework. The various components have spheres irregularly welded to them in strangely familiar patterns, as well as markings in a magical language (the names of various stars), but the parts all move with some difficulty as they're a bit corroded. The sphere weighs a great deal, more perhaps than it should even, furthermore, it can't fit through the trap door in Area 8, and would not survive a drop over the side of the tower. The item is an armillary, a complicated mechanical device designed to show the location of the stars and planets. As it is currently set, the stars depicted on the armillary won't look remotely right to anyone with anyone who has any astrological or astronomical knowledge (who should also recognize the purpose of the device).

The armillary is a powerful magical item capable of realigning the future and adjusting the fabric of fate. It is activated by moving its various pieces until they match the current sky pattern (reasonably easy for someone observant who knows what the object is for). At the point the stars depicted by the armillary match those above it will begin to shudder and glow with a pale greenish light that causes mild nausea in any creature with infravision due to the (harmless) magical radiation it produces. When the armillary is moved into a different configurations it will suddenly stop glowing and the person manipulating it will stand stunned by a strange and prophetic vision, their fate irrevocably changed. Unfortunately the armillary

has been damaged by the years it has rested out in the elements and it will only work once. It's ability to banish the phantasms in the tower will still be effective however.

Ways to use the armillary in your campaign:

- 1. Railroad You can simply give the player who's character uses the armillary a paragraph containing their vision see below for ideas, and then play out the resulting effect within the campaign.
- 2. Random Below is a table of prophecies, and some of these are big ones. All are designed to encourage a 0 or 1st level party to move away from the home village, pushed on by larger events or lured by the promises of treasure. Let the players see the table afterwards to prove you're into totally random world generation.

D10	RANDOMIZED PROPHECY FROM THE ARMILLARY OF THE FATIDIC STARS
1	War - The God of slaughters laughs in your ears, war is coming and raiders already cross the frontier. Before the month is out you home will be ashes and all you have known will be bones in the dust. Before the year is done great armies will clash, and you know where the decisive blow will land.
2	Travel - Hazy lands, so different from home call out to you, deserts, jungles, alien spires and strange goods will bring you great wealth, all you must do is go and find them beyond the horizon.
3	Beast - You are now of the beasts, and soon the change will overtake you unless you can find a cure. (PC develops some kind of nasty lycanthropy - it won't immediately make them into a slavering terror, but it will eventually.
4	Plague - That tinker you passed on the road? His wares bring death, plague is taking hold of your nearest and dearest, to return would be certain death, instead you must flee before it and the mockeries it will create out of its victims.
5	Stalker - You shouldn't have meddled because now the watchers beyond the stars know your name, you must flee the harbinger they have sent, for should it reach you the end of your life will come, and with it the end of all life.
6	Power - Your future is glorious, you are a king without a throne. Raise an army and none shall stand before you. In your old age you will sit on the throne of an empire the likes of which were long believed lost to the world.
7	Doom - Your doom awaits, every step you take brings you closer to death and worse, to unlife. (PC will take maximum damage from all attacks, but when killed rise as some kind of self-directed, intelligent undead).
8	Megadungeon - You know where they built it, the ancients, and you know its vaults are bursting with wealth and glory. It has lain untouched for too long, and you can find it - it's close by.
9	Disaster - The meteor approaches, the tidal wave hangs poised to crash. Soon the world you know, from smallest village to greatest capital will be remade in tragedy and tumult. You know where to go to survive the initial deluge, but the after that all will be struggle.
10	Changeling - The cosmos has revealed to you alone that the current crown prince is a monstrous changeling and if he is allowed to gain the throne in several years time he will plunge the kingdom into endless wars, promote evil cults and otherwise make life terrible.

3. Player Driven - Ask the player what they see in their vision, and incorporate it as their fate. In the manner of visions twist elements until they are almost unrecognizable. If the player is confused ask them for three words and build a vision around them, or pluck three important words form whatever min-maxing pablum is produced.

CRYPT - AREA 10

For a crypt (which this room is) **Area 10** is very brightly lit. The walls are smooth and have been sheathed in gray and white polished stone, while the floor is tiled in the same material except for a 10' diameter circle in the center which has been decorated with mosaic.

At the bottom of the stairs are a jumble of bones, many of them human, and odd cast off bits of equipment. These are the remains of plunderers killed by the Phantasms and the Hated Pretender above. The Pretender will strip the bodies of items he thinks he can use and then cast the bodies below in a futile effort to placate the Phantasms. There are at least five sets of bones here, tangled with scraps of clothing and bits of rotten leather.

Along the Southern wall of the room (the bottom of the map) are two other bodies still clad in some sort of armor. These unfortunate adventurers stumbled into the crypt at night and were rapidly overwhelmed the numerous Phantasms here. They still wear their equipment.

Corpse 1 - A human sized female wearing gleaming silvered scale mail +1 and clutching a steel buckler shaped like a shell. A wickedly barbed mace rests on the ground near her. She has a silver holy symbol of a well known water deity around her neck (30GP) and 28 SP in her belt pouch.

Corpse 2 - Small human or elven male wearing blackened leather armor (still wearable) with built in scabbards for up to six daggers. A pair of silver daggers are clutched in his boney hands and he wears a backpack containing 30' of silk rope, and 7 stoppered flasks. Six flasks are oil, stoppered with pitch but the last, marked with a red wax stopper is deadly poison if ingested (Save or Die) and can be baked onto an edged weapon to provide a one time additional 1D6 of damage on the first strike.

If this were an introductory adventure for a mega-dungeon I would put a map to the entrance in the dead assassin's backpack.

The crypt is the source of Phantasms and during the night all active ones crowd down here in the light. During the day they hunt upstairs looking for victims and enjoying the sunlight. At night there will be 2d10 + 10 phantasms in this room clinging to every surface. During the day there is only a 20% that 1D4 Phantasms will be wandering through. The Hated Pretender is deathly afraid of this room and doesn't even know what it contains.

Mural: The entire ceiling has been painted with a cosmological mural, and many of the stars, and the sun at the center appear to be made from inlaid gems that have been enchanted with continual light. The stones are not gems, but rather glass and worth only 1SP each, for a total of 45GP. It will take at least 3 hours to pry all 450 odd of them out of the ceiling.

If the mural is copied and the magical armillary in **Area 9** set to show the stars it depicts the Phantasms in the Prison will be banished and will disappear in a soft tinkling like shattered glass. This effect will work even if the armillary has been used for prophecy.

Cistern of Bones - The large circular area of the floor is clearly delineated by a slightly raised ring. On the ring, painted in an old but still readable version of common is the phrase "These Sainted Dead Shall be Free to Roam the Night's Heavens". Inside the raised ring is a somber mosaic in white and gray tones depicting a spiral of skulls. It appears that some of the skulls in the center have sparkling eyes (an effect created by valueless glass chips). Unfortunately the entire mosaic is a thin floor, incapable of supporting over 100lbs and it will collapse,

dropping anyone over that weight (remember to include equipment) into a charnel pit 10' below. A fall into the pit will do 1D6 points of damage, and the victim will land amongst a large number of bleached brittle bones.

These bones are those of victims of the Hated Pretender and the source of the Phantasms. Disturbing them will immediately cause an additional 1D6 Phantasms to manifest in the pit.

Bones of the Anointed: There are four marble sarcophagi around the perimeter of the room, these contain the bones of long dead templars. The outside of these sarcophagi are roughly human shaped, but have not been cared with any detail. Opening each of the coffins will reveal a skeleton in ancient and decayed copper plate-mail designed to mimic feathers. The armor is worthless as protection, but the copper content might be melted down and is worth about 50 GP. The sarcophagus on the West wall also holds a ceremonial gold etched mace, which is a perfectly functional non-magical mace worth 250 GP.

In the North part of the room an alcove containing a more ornate sarcophagus and sectioned off bar iron bars. The tomb is fully carved in the shape of an armored man, whose face is that of a bird of prey. The bars can be broken on a hard STR check (D20+10 under STR) using even makeshift tools. If leverage and ropes are used up to three characters may add their Strength together to make the roll.

The sarcophagus is trapped so that a bronze scything blade will slash down from the roof of the alcove to about mid-chest level on a normal human when it is opened. The blade strikes as a 6 HD monster for 1D8 points of damage. If the alcove is examined carefully a wire can be seem running into the wall from the sarcophagus and a slit in the upper left side of the alcove will be noted. The trap can be safely disabled by hammering an spike into the slit or triggered from afar.

Within the sarcophagus is a skeleton with a strangely mutated beak faced skull in a suit of high quality bronze plate mail (human sized normal plate mail) holding a bone scroll tube. Within the tube are 10 small rubies, each worth 25 GP. The rubies will detect as magic, and each ruby, if a drop of blood is applied to it will turn into a small red berry that can be eaten to magically restore 1HP.

HORRORS OF THE PRISON

The tower was built as a magical prison for a hated tyrant, whose crimes against a long forgotten and distant religious state would be grievous if anyone remembered them. The tyrant was ritually tortured to death and raised as an almost indestructible zombie like creature. He was locked within a well furnished and highly symbolic tower by an army of lawful crusader warriors in the service of a terrible bird god. In order to ensure the tyrant's eternal torment the crusaders buried the blessed bones of many of his victims in the tower and enchanted them so that they would continuously create unreasoning Phantasms of Vengeance.

There are only two types of monsters in the Prison, the Hated Pretender, an undead revenant of the tyrant prisoner, who can be reasoned with to a degree, and Phantasms of holy vengeance, which are horrible monsters of lawful revenge. The Phantasms roam the tower freely during daylight, and retreat at night. Since they mostly seek to torment and attack the Hated Pretender he hides during the day in **Area 6** and continues his frightened and pitiful existence. At night he roams the tower, especially the upper level, and insanely meditates on his fate, his desire for food and his highly implausible revenge. The Pretender can be reasoned with and while all he wants is to be left alone, he may be convinced not to attack if the party stays away from **Areas 6** and **8**. The Pretender knows how the armillary functions, but being dead has no fate and can't use it. He will tell the PC's how to use it if they befriend him and give him gifts of either treasure of food. The Pretender especially prizes cooked

meals and would do almost anything for a piece of pie or similar baked good. He will not fight against the Phantasms or give the players his treasure for any reason.

THE HATED PRETENDER

AC 7 (magic or silver only), HD 3 (hp 15) [may be turned] #AT 2 claw/claw 1d6/1d6, MV('30) Save MU 4, ML 10. Rise form dead the next night unless body is destroyed.

Whatever the Hated Pretender did he's likely been punished for it long since. He was converted into an undead and undying parody of himself by a sect of fanatically lawful warrior priests and placed in the prison to be tormented by Phantasms of Vengeance trapped with him. The Pretender can be destroyed by normal means, but his battered limbs will reform and his unlife will return the night after he is 'killed' unless his body is burnt and the ashes scattered or purified with unholy water.

The Hated Pretender is a pitiful undead wretch, who despite retaining a normal intelligence, has been driven several varieties of insane and barely remembers his previous life as some sort of monarch. The Pretender's torturers were successful in tormenting him to madness and the thing lives in constant, overpowering fear of being burned and shredded by the Phantasms (having had this happen to him numerous times). He appears as an obviously unwell man: skeletal, stooped, with wild hair and beard, parched crackling skin, open wounds that ooze only crusted brown ichor and huge bright green eyes. He wears the cast off remnants of peasants' clothing (from a more recent victim) and a comical "crown" constructed of small animal bones, bird feathers, twigs and bits of thread. His real crown was plundered years ago by a local tough/road agent named Black Jenny and her gang of miscreant sons, which the Pretender remembers very clearly.

He is not actually aggressive, but the Phantasms require light to manifest he is equally afraid of light as he is in phantasms. The Pretender becomes agitated in the presence of light, fleeing to a dark area if possible and launching a furious attack with his claw like hands and unholy strength on anyone carrying a light if trapped.

The Pretender is undead and can be turned as a 4HD creature. He will whine and simper indecently while turned.

PHANTASM OF VENGEANCE

Phantasms all have the following stats, but each individual Phantasm's appearance varies. The table below gives idea, but is not exhaustive.

AC 4, HD 1 (hp 5) #AT 1 touch 1d3, MV('30) Save MU 1, ML 12.

1D6	PHANTASMS OF VENGEANCE - APPEARANCE
1	A glowing scorpion made of light with the face of an enraged infant. It crawls on the ceiling and walls and will sting with its tail to attack.
2	Levitating balls of crystal that swirl around their target draining life and vitality. When smashed each ball releases a different laugh.
3	A flurry of white feathered wings, far too many for a single creature, out of which a silver beat lashes and lacerates.
4	Illuminated floating featureless female figure, it slips forward offering an embrace and its touch burns.
5	Robed figure that appears to be made of stained glass and attacks with its razor edges.
6	A blazing inverse shadow of a warrior, made of glaring light, that attacks its target's shadow resulting in injury to the actual target.

A nasty species of vengeful lawful manifestation, each of these entities is the distilled desire for just and holy revenge of any number of lawful victims who died of violence. They are not complete spirits themselves, just a collection of the departed souls' earthly disbelief, rage and sadness at their slaughter. Phantasms are not very intelligent and seek vengeance on anyone they can reach that isn't a cleric or anointed follower of a specific lawful religion or cult. Given the ancient nature of the cult that built the prison this is effectively everyone. The phantasms can't really be destroyed, without a proper exorcism (or similar ritual), but can be forced to dissipate and reform hours or days late by attacking them with normal weapons.

Phantasms of Vengeance are Nyctophobic and cannot abide darkness, even the darkness of normal night. Torchlight or magical light is sufficient for them to manifest, but a lack of natural light makes them uncomfortable and easier to chase off (Morale 8). The Phantasms trapped in the tower will retreat to the basement during the night hours and then storm forth at dawn trying to catch the Pretender in a lighted space. In former years this tactic worked some of the time, but for the past few decades the Phantasms have been frustrated as the Pretender has become paranoid in his level of caution.

Phantasms are undead, but are turned as 2HD monsters due to their strange nature and may only be turned by clerics of neutral or chaotic deities.

When there is a percentage to encounter Phantasms within the Prison it should be rolled against if the party has been outside of the room for more than three turns as the Phantasms are constantly generated in **Area 10** and destroying a single entity only releases the energy that made it so that an new phantasm can form.

LARGER MAP

